

## **Construction of New Lifting Bridge Planning Application Comment**

Newham BID represents over 140 businesses on Newham Industrial Estate, a commercial area with a combined rateable value equivalent to many small towns in Cornwall. The lifting bridge will be constructed between Lighterage Quay on Newham and Boscawen Park at Malpas.

We note the many supportive comments on this portal and in principle, the idea of improved walking and cycling routes sounds positive; however, there are different opinions about the project amongst Newham businesses as demonstrated by a survey we carried out; some of Newham's employees would use the bridge in their lunch hour whilst many other businesses cannot understand why anyone would wish to mix leisure and industrial uses on the same site.

Hence Newham BID has taken a neutral position on the bridge but is deeply concerned about the access proposals associated with this project and fears for the safety of our community including cyclists, pedestrians and those with disabilities if this project with its ill-conceived and dangerous access plans, proceeds.

Whilst views differ on the suitability of the bridge in this location, all Newham businesses are very clear that they want this project delivered safely and respectfully, acknowledging that Newham is a business location.

Newham BID supports better access for **all** including motorists, cyclists and pedestrians as well as disabled users but **'better' should also mean 'safe'**, a point we will reiterate in this response and a concern also shared by other organisations. Newham BID believes it may be possible to prepare a safe scheme that delivers benefits to all; sadly, the one on the table currently does neither.

We take no pleasure from being right before. Newham BID foresaw accidents where the Newham Trail joins Lighterage Hill, a scheme that was deemed safe by Cornwall Council's highways team; clearly not, given that there have been three serious life-changing accidents in the last 2 years caused by the design of the highway environment. Two months ago, Cornwall Council have rectified the situation putting in the simple barriers Newham BID asked for in 2021.

Regardless of any merits or otherwise that the bridge may bring, we have no choice but to object to this planning application on safety grounds.

What is missing from this planning application and has not been shared with the public are the access proposals which Newham BID and our businesses have seen through a meeting with Council representatives held at the end of June. We believe that if this information was in the public domain, as it should be, and part of the planning application, then the responses may be somewhat different. No-one wants a tragedy to unfold but there is a high likelihood of this happening with the current access proposals associated, but absent, from this planning application. We understand that the highway proposal will be considered as a separate 'bolt-on' decision by the local authority when it should be intrinsic to the planning application; that alone should mean the application is refused. Furthermore, this application is out of kilter with what would be expected if a private sector applicant applied for planning consent on a commercial development.

Having viewed the Council's transport proposals, Newham businesses are terrified – the plans include cyclists in the middle of Lighterage Hill at the busy Newham Road junction jostling with HGVs and pedestrians on a narrow path with poor visibility, adjacent to a company using fork-lift trucks. This fear has been qualified by experienced transport consultants, TPA whose report appears on the documents section of this portal and should be read - <https://tinyurl.com/bdhmf2x>. TPA who have undertaken a swept-path analysis of the Council's proposals, conclude that the scheme could result in tragedy; a fear that is also shared by Truro City Council who refused to support the planning application for similar safety reasons – see the minutes of their meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2024 at <https://tinyurl.com/37ev3zce>. The Police also had safety concerns as indicated by the press article here - <https://www.cornwalllive.com/news/cornwall-news/grave-concerns-cornwall-over-safety-9566784>

We have shared our fears with Cornwall Council representatives which are very real and come from people who have, between them, hundreds of years of transport experience, many of them driving HGVs which are prevalent on Newham. So far, we have had no feedback to suggest any of the comprehensive feedback we gave Cornwall Council will influence their access proposals.

At this point, it is important to say a bit about Newham, Truro's business quarter, which will give some context to the position we are taking.

Newham is primarily an industrial estate. Our estate comprises nearly three quarters storage and distribution businesses and is similar in cumulative rateable value to many town centres in Cornwall- <https://shorturl.at/8Lywm>. Across Newham, there are thousands of vehicle movements every day, many of these using HGVs. We are a large generator of wealth and a major employer, offering in a number of cases, high salaries and good career progression. In our view, Newham is a flagship business location that Truro, as well as Cornwall should be immensely proud of and want to protect.

We provide valuable services to the community. We feed people, provide public transport, deliver mail, empty bins, deal with waste, provide emergency services, support vulnerable people through care services as well as providing a base for thriving businesses such as garages, offices and DIY trade counters. Many small businesses start up here and grow. We are also home to the Port of Truro and understand there are plans to invest in the area at the far end of Newham. The statutory authorities including Councils, Police, South-West Water, MOD and National Grid rely on the businesses operating from Newham to provide important services to the people of Cornwall. Our economic importance cannot be overlooked and should, in our view, take priority over what is effectively a leisure proposal.

The lifting bridge project brings no economic benefit to the businesses who are on our thriving industrial estate which is at odds with Town Deal being an economic programme; only some leisure value which a few of our businesses may support; the majority cannot understand the rationale for mixing leisure in what is a heavily industrialised area and believe 'fun' should remain on the other side of the river, something we were reassured by a Council representative at a Newham meeting would be the case. There is also likely to be an economic disbenefit for Newham businesses from the bridge project as road access will be compromised and the likelihood of a serious accident will threaten the viability of our estate for existing businesses as well as curtailing future investment opportunities. One business has already left Newham due to the previous road narrowing scheme, another has seriously considered whether to invest further and many more have lots tens of thousands of pounds through 2023's disruptive and poorly delivered works. But the fear of a serious accident from the businesses on Newham comes above their own commercial interests. Our private sector businesses are putting safety before commercial gain and have a community conscience.

We would like to make it clear that Newham BID supported Truro Loops previously BUT only on the basis that there would be improved access for all including motorists respecting our industrial estate. The plan was to widen the road between Gas Hill and Lighterage Hill and put in place a cantilevered footpath over the river, a proposal that Cornwall Council agreed as appropriate and safe in 2015/16 - <https://tinyurl.com/2fzpd93>. They said themselves, that the road was 'demonstrably unsuitable for the mixture of traffic, pedestrians and cyclists.' Cornwall Council's portfolio holder for transport at the time, supported the proposed solution. That was at a time when common sense prevailed and traffic was lighter.

Fast forward to 2023 and 2024 and the comment that 'this isn't about common sense' and 'policy comes before health and safety' has been stated by Council representatives during meetings on Newham both in relation to the bridge project and the previous road narrowing scheme. Nothing should trump safety.

So far, Cornwall Council have failed to deliver their own preferred scheme which would benefit all users, nor are we aware that they have considered any of the other options we have discussed with them to enable the widening of the road to provide a safe footway. There is now more of a need than ever before to deliver those improvements given the increased traffic due to the success of Newham, the construction traffic using

Newham as part of the Higher Newham Farm development and the bridge proposal which will encourage more people including vulnerable users to visit Newham.

As a business community, we feel severely let down by the statutory authorities and question whether they support the viability of Newham as a business area at all; the approach taken to date would imply that Cornwall Council would prefer Newham to morph into a leisure, residential or business park comprising offices only.

We understand that the bridge is the Town Deal's 'iconic' project so why has Cornwall Council not designed a scheme that has safety as its core value? We accept that the budget is finite but with the project escalating in costs anyway, we have made the plea to **either deliver it safely or not at all**. Safety should not be compromised to enable people to cycle and walk. Neither should safe and easy access for our business community be compromised. Please be aware that businesses are paying higher rates now for reduced access and fear of accidents with all the sad and stressful consequences to follow.

The current road situation makes this project unsafe to proceed unless the road widening and segregated path is implemented providing safe access for all. No-one wants a tragedy to unfold as it has with the Newham Trail; it has taken three serious accidents with life changing injuries for those individuals and permanent memories for the innocent motorists involved, before a few simple barriers have been installed this year. We are in possession of CCTV footage that is harrowing and demonstrates that the road environment was the cause of the accidents. Newham BID is concerned that history will repeat itself if the bridge scheme with unsuitable access, proceeds.

Cornwall Council have already narrowed Newham Road and installed a footpath that is rarely used by cyclists who continue to ride on the road. That was against the wishes of Newham BID and saw businesses lose tens of thousands of pounds during construction through poor delivery with absolute contempt shown for our business community. Now that scheme has been delivered, it is frankly ridiculous to take people off that path, up Gas Hill (an incline that makes this project totally unsuitable for the disabled or those with walking impediments incidentally) along the Trail and back down Lighterage Hill. Human nature says that people will walk and cycle along Newham Road following a flat, riverside route as the easiest and most attractive option. So, this is where the dangers will begin and why segregating users as per the original CORMAC adopted plan, is the only safe solution if the bridge project is to proceed.

Any support for the bridge should be entirely conditional on the Gas Hill to Lighterage Hill road improvement being fully implemented.

As regards to the technical merit of the planning application, we have taken a look at this and believe it to be seriously flawed as follows:

- The planning application and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is fundamentally flawed since it fails to fully assess the wider impacts and environmental effects of the off-site highway works proposed for Newham Road/Lighterage Hill.
- The planning application and EIA only considers the benefits of the proposal for walking and cycling, is biased towards them and does not consider motorists who are the primary user of Newham
- There is no economic assessment which describes the impacts of the proposal together with an assessment of the effects on businesses within Newham.
- The planning application and EIA fails to describe the full effects on transport and highways and the full impact of the proposal for businesses with Newham. No consideration to the highway safety of the proposal to all users (policy 27).



- Given the deficiencies within the planning application and EIA in so far as its failure to address all the environmental effects, it is considered that any planning decision to approve would result in the decision being open to challenge through a judicial review.

On another separate but related subject, the road between Gas Hill and Lighterage Hill is deteriorating to such an extent that it is only a matter of time before it slips away into the river. We foresee a 'Dawlish' situation where no-one will be able to get on and off the estate which has implications for all the business and community services previously mentioned. Again, we have repeatedly flagged this to no avail. Whilst not directly relevant to the planning application for the bridge, this further highlights the lack of concern and disrespect being shown to our business community.

Newham BID never expected to need to challenge our Local Authority on safety and it is with some sadness and dismay, that this is where we find ourselves. We say that whatever view is taken of the merits of the bridge as a community project, highways considerations should be critical to any planning application and we do not understand how planning can be granted separately from highways consent. For the project to be safe, the two cannot be considered in isolation. Safety should not be constrained by finances. If there is not enough money to do it safely, then do not do it at all.

This scheme puts lives and livelihoods at risk.

On the basis that there is no safe access plan as part of this application, Newham BID objects to this planning application.

#### **Selection of feedback regarding safety and business viability concerns**

*Any support for the bridge would be entirely conditional on the Gas Hill to Lighterage Hill road improvement being fully implemented.*

*The access to and from businesses on the estate has been badly compromised by the current degradation caused by the construction of the cycle path. This is for a perceived "facility" that is hardly ever used. The crossing and turn up to the trail at Gas Hill is almost never used with the occasional cyclists and walkers opting to brave the road. I personally have never seen the crossing used.*

*The bridge only joins one end of the trail to another at huge expense, and in order to achieve this will prejudice the working lives of those using the Newham Business area.*

*I think the idea in principle is a good one, however I have several concerns about viability without the current road adjacent to the river undergoing a significant redevelopment too. Personally, I would not want to cycle through an industrial estate. I would not find it appealing and unless there are significant changes, I, as a cyclist and pedestrian, would have safety concerns. I am not sure that it is possible to balance the two things of a usable, safe industrial estate with appropriate access, with the creation of an attractive leisure feature.*

*If it were possible to create a genuinely safe cycle/walking trail, without compromise to the industrial estate access or road safety, then I would be in favour. If not, then I think one has to prioritise commerce over leisure in this part of the town.*

*Access to any bridge in this location would entail major road works to Newham, a thriving industrial area generating many jobs, local spending power and not least very large rates revenue for the Council. This last fact was totally ignored when the Truro Loop path went in. I travel this road almost daily and its usage v cost of construction is mind blowing, there is never anybody on it. The loops idea must be analysed in its entirety as, by my observations, it has failed to deliver its goals by a great margin.*

*This really is a very stupid idea. Why would people come down to an Industrial Estate, for pleasure, in the first instance?*

*PLANS are poor, traffic crossing needs work. This is an industrial estate with large traffic movements, plans do not seem to reflect this.*

*Not sure why we need to encourage people to come into the industrial park which presents hazards such as pedestrians/joggers/cyclists for car drivers, lorries etc? The main roads are already narrow and windy in places. I have narrowly missed a jogger on Lighterage Hill who ran straight out from a pathway across the road in front of my car. The jogger had headphones on which only made the situation worse. In different circumstances there could have been an HGV or plant coming down the hill, unable to stop in time and the result completely different.*

*Encouraging the general public into a busy industrial park will present unnecessary hazards and could result in injury or worse.*

*I would also like to express my concerns to the public's health and safety with Newham being an industrial estate, The road is used by HGVs daily which could cause some serious harm to children and adults using the bridge. The junction located on lighterage hill is dangerous and most traffic coming down rarely look right before going Newham Road.*

*Why don't they just buy us all out and turn the whole area into housing and a theme park?*

*This is an industrial estate, not a play area, there have been many near misses and a few accidents involving pedestrians and cyclists over the years, some very big vehicles run through the estate. Our company will have to run a forklift across a proposed new cycle path and it will be totally blind because our building obstructs the view up lighterage hill. The cost is not justifiable for the amount of people that will use it.*

*I think it is a huge investment which could be better spent elsewhere, especially considering the vast amount of money already spent encouraging pedestrians and cyclists into the industrial park with little consideration for public safety.*

*Newham is a busy industrial estate with considerable traffic including regular flow of large vehicles. It is not a place to encourage walking and cycling as several 'near misses' have proven. Since the introduction of the cycle path against Newham businesses wishes, we have seen virtually no use by cyclists. Some cyclists have even chosen to still cycle on the roads.*

*With the proposed changes to the road layout at the bottom of Lighterage Hill - The hub and centre of the majority of the heavy vehicle movements in and around Newham, this can only lead to increased delays and danger to all users of the estate - this will be of no benefit whatsoever and can only lead to increased delay costs and risk to all businesses and users.*

*The council have already stated that the majority of particulate pollution is not from the engines of vehicles, but from the brakes and tyres. What possible reason can there be to increase the stopping and starting of vehicles by degrading the Lighterage Hill junction?*

*It will also cause enormous parking problems on the Malpas side as workers in Newham use the Bridge to access their work place blocking all parking for Boscawen Park etc. This will inevitably have a detrimental economic impact on any business at Boscawen Park or in that area.*

*What is the bridge going to achieve economically, I can't imagine?*

*I cannot see how the bridge brings any economic benefit to Newham. Users won't be hanging around but this encourages more transit though the area. People will stop at the start/end of their walk/ride (as they do on the Camel Trail etc.) but I don't think Cafe culture is about to explode in Newham. The Cornish weather for one will prevent that.*

*All businesses have been affected over the past 12 months by the constant roadworks to implement the cycle path. There is no economic benefit to the type of businesses on Newham to access to the other side over the river.*

*If there were facilities in Boscawen Park e.g. Café, sports, there may be a benefit for the park, but I don't envisage any benefit for Newham.*

*This is Cornwall and we all need to travel by car to get anywhere in the business world.*

*Any further disruption following the recent road narrowing works would result in additional disruption to my business and employees.*

*We have already lost thousands of pounds in delays and damage on the first phase. This phase and the continuing delays following completion caused by the re design and degradation of the junction will have a serious effect. The meeting to discuss this with your Project Manger only served to deepen my concerns.*

*We operate over 65 vehicles, mostly HGV's, with numerous returning to the depot multiple times a day. Lost time in traffic increases in overtime payments and labour down time will impact massively.*

*If the last road works are anything to go by it will be a major loss of time and revenue to all at that end of the Newham Industrial area.*

*Yet another reason to try to stop business's operating. If you want the businesses to move out, find somewhere for them to go and then develop the estate as you wish.*

*Being based near the bottom of Lighterage Hill this will have a direct impact on both staff, customers and business travel into our premises. Retail is already suffering the on-going economic challenges post COVID and this will be another challenge to overcome. Cornwall Council have already driven footfall out of the City Centre with the ever-increasing parking charges couple with serious anti-social behaviour issues that don't get resolved.*

*The more people have to struggle to come to my showroom will mean a lack of them and therefore our USP of having a highly accessible showroom to close deals will be mute therefore directly impacting potentially every single sale we make as it's used very regularly.*

*We book appointments for MOT's to start every half hour throughout the working day, My customers being delayed by more than a few minutes would result in that appointment being cancelled due to the time limit of every appointment. Therefore, we could expect a loss of approximately 20% of our turnover.*

*There is already a development at the top of Lighterage hill for a large number of houses for which I believe none of the local businesses saw notification of a planning application a development at the bottom could cause a huge problem.*

*If it causes as much problem as the previous works (which I fully expect), the lost revenue should be covered by the council. We lost over £43k last time and are still fighting to regain customers trust in the area. It's easy to lose customers as they change habits, but extremely hard to regain them.*

*The council should be paying compensation for the lost trade.*

*We have already experienced a drop in business due to last years' roadworks of approximately 20% due to difficult access and long delays. It has also cost us approximately £50/week in additional staff wages sat queuing in traffic.*

*From the plans I assume if they are putting in a pavement at the bottom to facilitate routes from the Newham trail to the quay this could cause greater disruption than the previous works especially given the additional traffic on lighterage hill due to site traffic for the housing estate now using the hill. This would increase commute times for most of our office team.*

*I am on Lighterage Hill and the access needs to be improved not made worse the cycle path is dangerous as it has no barriers and people run and cycle straight into the road. We are a very busy company and we work on a busy industrial estate any delays with roadworks impact on my ability to service the many Truro based customers we deal with. Customers will not visit the depot if they are going to again be held up as time is a precious commodity.*

*We had to increase all our travel times to accommodate Cormac's traffic lights which remained in place even when there were no workers on site for days. Lanes were closed off with no lights - we sustained damage to tyres, mirrors etc through the inadequate width left for traffic to pass.*

*The road narrowing scheme caused a considerable disruption to both the businesses and employees and has certainly acted as a disincentive to business activities at Newham.*

*We delayed our investment in developing 3 industrial units setting the project back 6 months. It has made me consider pulling out of Newham all together as the Council obviously see the whole area as a hinderance to their plans for a 'green city'*

*The previous scheme has cost us thousands, let alone the impact on the environment, this will all increase again should this scheme go ahead. We were all ignored on the last scheme, we will be again. We as businesses do not count for anything anymore. Are the Council going to provide well paid, long term employment for the ones that lose their jobs because of increased expenses to businesses.*

*During the road narrowing scheme traffic was only flowing poorly at best and still causes issues today especially when large vehicles park on the road making it almost impassable; add more construction traffic and flow restrictions will equal major problems for most businesses on Newham. The issue could be that however we vote we will be ignored as we were in the road narrowing scheme when the majority of businesses voted unanimously against it.*

*The road narrowing caused and is still causing a massive lose in trade. Customers called to tell us they were avoiding the area while the road works we happening. Once people change habits, it's difficult to change them back.*

*I have a large number of builders who visit my store each day and also 5 articulated lorries and 5 X 27 tonne lorries each week. We are a very busy company and whilst the road works happened last year it caused many of my customers to stay away so I had to put on additional deliveries which added an additional £4000 a week cost onto the depot. The roads need to be made wider with better access not reducing it for the few people who will use it and there is a current danger on Lighterage Hill with the cycle path and no barriers; people cycle and run straight into the road.*

*It is an Industrial Estate - A place of work - There is no way that further incursions on the viability of the continuing access in and out of the estate and in particular around the junction with Lighterage Hill - where the majority of heavy vehicle movements occur - should be considered or countenanced. There is quite simply not room to make this safe. Newham was virtually accident free until the inception of the cycle path - since then there have been 3 serious accidents with serious injuries to persons. An industrial estate is not a place of leisure.*

*I would be happy to see it, but the impact would be limited, the impact on others would be negative and dangerous, so with a new dangerous road system on the estate already imposed, it would be clearly stupid to make it even worse.*

*Without the Gas Hill to Lighterage Hill road improvement being fully implemented there is no benefit to motorists, businesses and employees. In fact, the proposed changes to the Lighterage Hill junction as a result of the bridge works would have a further detrimental effect on businesses within Newham. With the scheme of business traffic using Newham raises a serious traffic conflict and particularly heavy vehicles road safety issue for cyclists.*

*A lot of money for little benefit.*

*Newham is an industrial site with very few retail businesses; all that will happen is accidents at junctions, far better to have built cantilevered pathway on river as per original plan, not repeated crossing of road by users blind to traffic.*

*The idea of the bridge is a good one but in its current layout it is wrong the road at the bottom of Lighterage Hill should have been made wider by claiming land from the river and then a cycle path could have been made. This is an industrial estate and I fear for anyone cycling or walking along the road and also for drivers who are being made to be the issue whilst they are just doing their jobs.*